

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9609

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 13417

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, FR, XA

SUBJECT: GISCARD AND FRENCH AFRICAN POLICY

DEPARTMENT PASS AS APPROPRIATE

SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH GISCARD WILL ATTEMPT TO PRESERVE SOME FORM OF THE SPECIAL FRENCH RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FORMER COLONIES, HIS POLICY TOWARDS AFRICA WILL TEND TO BE MOTIVATED MORE SIGNIFICANTLY THAN IN THE PAST BY COMMERCIAL AND RAW MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS. END SUMMARY

1. THE DEATH OF PRESIDENT POMPIDOU FOLLOWED BY THE FIRST ROUND DEFEAT OF CHABAN-DELMAS MADE IT CLEAR TO FRENCH-SPEAKING AFRICAN LEADERS THAT THE OLD PRIVILEGED RELATIONSHIP WITH FRANCE UNDER DE GAULLE AND HIS POLITICAL HEIRS WAS ENDED. GISCARD'S DECISION ANNOUNCED MAY 30 TO DISSOLVE THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL FOR THE COMMUNITY AND AFRO-MALAGASY AFFAIRS UNDER JACQUES FOCCART FURTHER SIGNALLED THE END OF AN ERA IN FRANCO-AFRICAN RELATIONS.

2. BUT GISCARD SEEMS TO BE MOVING QUICKLY TO TRY TO REASSURE FRANCOPHONE AFRICANS ABOUT FRANCE'S CONTINUED INTEREST IN THEM. AS RECOMMENDED BY PRESIDENT SENGHOR-- AMONG OTHERS--GISCARD'S NEW GOVERNMENT INCLUDES A
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MINISTRY OF COOPERATION. WHILE THERE HAS BEEN SPECULA-

TION THAT ADDITIONAL AUTHORITY MAY BE ADDED, THE NEW MINISTRY WILL DEFINITELY INCLUDE THOSE FUNCTIONS FORMERLY EXERCISED BY BOTH FOCCART'S SECRETARIAT GENERAL AT THE ELYSEE AND THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR COOPERATION HEADED BY DENIAU IN THE SECOND MESSMER GOVERNMENT (AND TRANSFERRED TO QUAI AUTHORITY DURING THE SHORT PERIOD OF MESSMER'S THIRD GOVERNMENT). THUS WITHIN THE FRENCH BUREAUCRACY THE FRENCH-SPEAKING AFRICAN STATES RETAIN A SPECIAL STATUS.

3. GISCARD'S CHOICE OF MINISTER, TOO, IS INTENDED TO REASSURE THE AFRICANS. IN PRESENTING HIS CABINET TO THE PUBLIC OVER TELEVISION MAY 29, GISCARD EMPHASIZED COOPERATION MINISTER ABELIN'S PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT EXPERIENCE AND SAID THAT "...A GREAT NUMBER OF CHIEFS OF STATE, NOTABLY OF FRANCOPHONE STATES, HAVE THEMSELVES BEEN PARLIAMENTARIANS IN FRENCH LIFE, AND IT IS GOOD THAT THEY WILL FIND AGAIN IN THIS POST A MAN WHOM THEY HAVE ALREADY KNOWN". ABELIN HIMSELF ANNOUNCED MAY 31 THAT THREE STUDY GROUPS WOULD SOON BE FORMED TO "RE-STUDY" FRENCH COOPERATION POLICIES. ABELIN ASSERTED THAT GISCARD WANTS COOPERATION POLICY TO BE EXERCISED ACTIVELY AND "TO RESULT IN A DOCTRINE ADAPTED TO THE CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES OF TODAY'S WORLD." HE HASTENED TO ADD THAT HENCEFORTH FRANCE WILL HAVE "AN EVEN GREATER INTEREST" IN THIS COOPERATION.

4. IN HIS FIRST OFFICIAL LUNCHEON AS PRESIDENT, GIVEN MAY 30 IN HONOR OF SENGHOR, GISCARD UNDERLINED HIS FIRM INTENTION TO INTEREST HIMSELF PERSONALLY IN MATTERS OF COOPERATION. SIMILARLY, IN REPLIES TO LETTERS OF CONGRATULATIONS FROM AFRICAN CHIEFS OF STATE, GISCARD HAS STRESSED THAT FRANCE WILL CONTINUE THE COOPERATION PROMOTED BY DE GAULLE AND POMPIDOU, WITH ESPECIALLY WARM WORDS FOR THE PRESIDENTS OF SENEGAL, IVORY COAST, ZAIRE, AS WELL AS THOSE OF THE NORTH AFRICAN STATES IN WHICH GISCARD ALSO ACCENTS FRANCO-ARAB AND MEDITERRANEAN COOPERATION.

4. IN HIS INITIAL STATEMENT ON FOREIGN POLICY MAY 30,
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GISCARD INCLUDED A STATEMENT CLEARLY DESIGNED TO CURRY FAVOR AMONG THE INDEPENDENT BLACK AFRICAN STATES WHEN HE SAID: "FRANCE WILL CONFIRM AND ACCENTUATE THE LIBERAL MISSION OF ITS DIPLOMACY BY SUPPORTING EVERYWHERE IN THE WORLD THE CAUSE OF LIBERTY AND THE RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION. IT (FRANCE) WILL FORBID ANY SALE OF ARMAMENTS WHICH WOULD BE CONTRARY TO THE EXERCISE OF SUCH A MISSION". SOUTH AFRICA IS WIDELY BELIEVED TO BE

THE INTENDED RECIPIENT OF THIS WARNING.

5. COMMENT: GISCARD'S PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC TO COMMENCE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 13417

IMMEDIATELY VIGOROUS CONDUCT OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS SEEMS ALREADY TO BE REFLECTED IN HIS EARLY RELATIONS WITH AFRICA. WHILE IT IS STILL TOO SOON TO MAKE ANY FIRM JUDGMENTS, WE BELIEVE HE WILL ATTEMPT TO CHANGE THE FORM OF FRENCH RELATIONS WITH THE FORMER BLACK AFRICAN COLONIES TO KEEP IN STEP WITH THE EVOLVING AFRICAN SCENE. AT THE SAME TIME, HE WILL TRY TO PRE-SERVE AS LONG AS POSSIBLE SOME KIND OF SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP IN COUNTRIES WHERE FRENCH ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL INTERESTS ARE MOST IMPORTANT. MOREOVER, HE CAN BE EXPECTED TO TRY TO ENLARGE FRENCH INFLUENCE IN OTHER AREAS OF THE CONTINENT WHERE THE ECONOMIC POTENTIAL IS GREATEST OR SCARCE RAW MATERIALS ARE AVAILABLE. HE MAY EVEN BE WILLING TO WEAKEN SOMEWHAT FRENCH TIES WITH SOUTH AFRICA IN ORDER TO IMPROVE THE FRENCH POSITION ELSEWHERE, BUT THIS IS VERY PROBLEMATICAL.

6. AREAS OF CHOICE WILL INCLUDE NORTH AFRICA, NIGERIA, IVORY COAST, GABON, CAMEROON, SENEGAL, ZAIRE, KENYA

AND MOZAMBIQUE AND ANGOLA SHOULD SELF-DETERMINATION
FOR THE PORTUGUESE TERRITORIES COME ABOUT. IN THE
COMING WEEKS, WE SHOULD HAVE A BETTER APPRECIATION OF
THE DIRECTION FRENCH AFRICAN POLICY IS HEADED.

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